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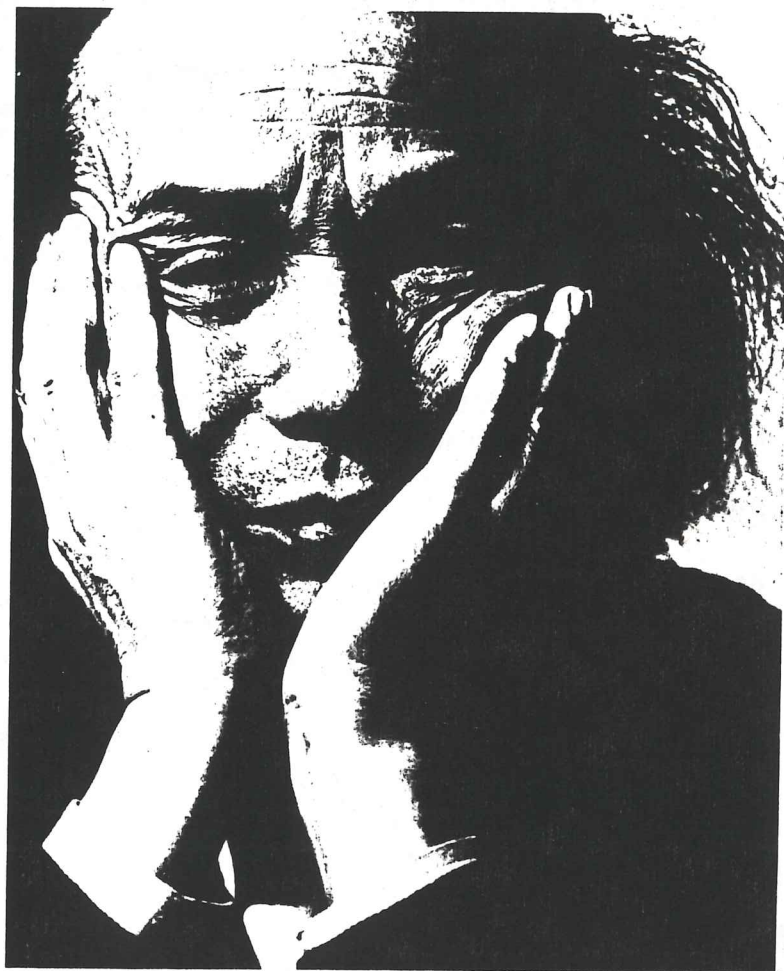


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season **1996**
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Robert Aitken Artistic Director

new music concerts presents
Toru Takemitsu Remembered



8:00 pm Thursday February 20 1997 (film at 7:00)

The Glenn Gould Studio / Canadian Broadcasting Centre

Thursday, February 20, 1997, 8:00 PM
Glenn Gould Studio
Canadian Broadcasting Centre

new music concerts presents
Toru Takemitsu
Remembered

(October 8, 1930–February 20, 1996)

7:00 pm Video:

"Music for the Movies: Toru Takemitsu"

Directed by Charlotte Zwerin

8:00 pm Concert:

Masque (1959/61) Dur. 10'

Continu, Incidental I (1959), Incidental II (1961)

Dianne Aitken, Robert Aitken, flute

Sacrifice (1962) Dur. 7'

Chant 1, Chant 2

Robert Aitken, flute, Alan Torok, lute

Bob Becker, vibraphone

Stanza II (1971) Dur. 6'

Erica Goodman, harp and tape

Voice (1971) Dur. 7'

Robert Aitken, solo flute

programme

Bryce (1976) Dur. 12'

Robert Aitken, alto flute,
Erica Goodman, Charlotte Moon, harps,
Robin Engelman, John Wyre, percussion

Intermission

Rain Spell (1982) Dur. 10'

Robert Aitken, flute, Stanley McCartney, clarinet,
Charlotte Moon, harp, Andrew Burashko, piano,
Robin Engelman, vibraphone

Itinerant (1989) Dur. 6'

—In Memory of Isamu Noguchi—
Robert Aitken, solo flute

and then I knew 'twas Wind (1992) Dur. 13'

Robert Aitken, flute, Steven Dann, viola,
Erica Goodman, harp

Air (1995) Dur. 7'

Robert Aitken, solo flute

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Tonight's program is being recorded by **Two New Hours** for broadcast on Sunday March 2, 1997; new music concerts' first concert of this season, "John Beckwith—A Portrait" will be broadcast on March 9th. Both shows begin at 10:05 pm on the CBC Stereo network.

Music is either sound or silence. As long as I live I shall choose sound as something to confront a silence. That sound should be a single, strong sound.

TORU TAKEMITSU (1962)

Born in Tokyo on October 8, 1930, Takemitsu had only a brief period of study with the composer Yasuji Kiyose and was mainly self-taught as a musician. As Takemitsu himself relates it, his musical epiphany occurred in his early teenage years when, while serving as a member of a student relief force in the hinterlands of Japan near the end of the War, he became transfixed by a friend's recording of the famous French chanson, *Parlez-mois d'amour*. Henceforth, he determined, he would make music himself someday—if only the War would end!

Unfortunately, after the collapse of Japanese militarism Takemitsu's parents refused to support his aspirations, and the young composer found himself quite literally "out on his ear". In order to support himself he worked for two years in the kitchen of a US military base, the drudgery of which at least had the advantage of free access to the piano in the dining hall.

In the course of his self-directed studies Takemitsu found himself drawn to the music of those composers who were themselves deeply influenced by the musical and philosophical traditions of Asian culture, especially Debussy, Messiaen, and Cage.

It was while he was a pupil of Kiyose in 1948 that he met his contemporaries Hayasaka and Matsudaira, who had much to teach him about traditional Japanese and Asian music. Between 1950 and 1952 the three of them took part in Kiyose's *Shin Sakkyokuha Kyokai* (New School of Composers) group, where Takemitsu received his first performances. At these concerts he established friendships with his colleagues Joji Yuasa and Kuniharu Akiyama. Together with several other painters, poets and performers they established a new group, the *Jikken Kobo* (Experimental Workshop), dedicated to the performance of mixed media works. Takemitsu's contributions to their repertoire included some of the earliest examples of *musique concrète*, free improvisation, graphic notation and aleatoric music.

Takemitsu came to international attention as a result of the lavish praise Stravinsky expressed after hearing his *Requiem* for strings in 1959. Henceforth Takemitsu's career blossomed, and all his future compositions were to be commissioned works. He enjoyed travelling throughout the world to prepare the first performances of these pieces and to discuss his music. He was composer-in-residence at the Canberra Spring Festival, the California Institute of Technology, Toronto's New Music Concerts, Berliner Festwochen, Colorado Musical Festival, Tanglewood Festival, Banff Centre, Aldeburgh Festival and many others. He also lectured at Harvard, Boston, Yale and other universities.

Takemitsu's music, with its inimitable integration of east and west, timbre and texture, and sound and silence, represents for many the prototype of the multi-cultural composer. In introducing **New Music Concerts'** 1996-97 season Robert Aitken lamented the fact that during his recent tour of Japan "the idea was put forward that Takemitsu may have been the last truly international Japanese composer and that most young composers were not really interested in being known internationally."

In 1962 Takemitsu became the first composer to write for Japanese instruments in a Western manner, introducing the lute-like *biwa* in the film *Seppuku* and pairing the instrument with the *shakuhachi* (bamboo flute) in his 1967 orchestral work *November Steps* (commissioned for the 125th anniversary of the New York Philharmonic—the first recording of the work was performed by the Toronto Symphony under Seiji Ozawa. Takemitsu's scores for the films of Akira Kurosawa (including the classics *Dodes'kaden*, and *Ran*) brought his music to an even larger audience in the 1970s & 80s.

When I was a child, the strong impressions movies made on me came not from the story, but from the words and images, including the music. Put another way, they came from unexpected, altered reality. Movie scenes are constantly shifting.

Movie music must also constantly change. But when I sit down to compose, personal feelings and immediate inclinations are inescapable. That is why participating in making a movie enriches my life as a composer.

TORU TAKEMITSU (1971)

In both his approach to film scores and in his personal life, Takemitsu was renowned for his ability to mimic dialects. At the drop of a swizzle-stick, notes film historian Donald Richie, Toru would amuse his *confrères* in many a Tokyo piano bar with a medley of jazz tunes, larded with a set of hilarious country and western send-ups and, as the evening deteriorated, "the most exquisite of melodic variations on a favourite ocarina".

Takemitsu's first visit to Toronto was at the invitation of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra for a performance of *November Steps* under Seiji Ozawa. Subsequently Robert Aitken brought the composer to Canada for festival performances of his chamber music in 1975 and 1983. The close friendships that developed between Mr. Aitken as well as the members of the Toronto-based NEXUS percussion ensemble led to the composition of a number of works which received their first performances through **New Music Concerts** auspices. The special relationship that continues to exist between Takemitsu and Canada was formally recognized in September of 1996 when the composer was posthumously awarded the highly prestigious Glenn Gould Prize, for his "exceptional contribution to the international world of music".

I do not compose for simple personal gain but to be reassured of my own being and to explore my relationship to others. Naturally, as one growing up in Japan I could not be independent of my country's traditions. But that awareness of my own national tradition has special meaning, since it came to me after I had studied Western music.

TORU TAKEMITSU (1980)

A partial performance of the early flute duet *Masque* (1959) was presented at the Karuisawa Festival of Contemporary Music in August of 1959. Takemitsu had won the first prize in their composition contest of the previous year for his string octet *Le Son Calligraphié I*. It was the first of many awards and distinctions that would grace his career. The titles of the movements appear to refer to the differing compositional approaches the composer adopts—while the first part of the work (*Continu*) is complex and polyphonic the following movements (*Incidental I&II*) are more straightforward and homophonic. The complete version was heard the following year in Tokyo in a performance by Soichi Minegishi and Shinya Koide.

For me composition always involves a strong interaction between music and words. To find an appropriate title for a composition I move back and forth between sounds and words. Many of my titles are strange; some critics think they are simply the result of a poetic whim. But when I decide on a title, it is not merely to suggest a mood but a mark of the significance of the music and the problems encountered in its general construction. Words are the means by which I replace emotion and conflict with a musical plan.

TORU TAKEMITSU (1987)

Takemitsu's programme note for his composition ***Sacrifice*** (1962) is an early example of his rather idiosyncratic sense of the English language—indeed, literature in general was a continuing source of inspiration for him.

*This work is devoted to a "God" who reigns over my imagination—over the world of my auditory imagination, though it is not meant for any specific religion. It is the reason why [the movements of] the work are called **Chant**, and [why] I believe that all the musical forms are to come to that of prayer.*

*The work was composed in 1962 for the Tokyo Contemporary Music Festival. It constitutes with my **Ring** and **Sonant** the tryptich which features the traditional lute.*

It is stillness or a dead silence that I intended to express. I hope it breathes vividly beyond every note.

TORU TAKEMITSU

(note provided for the Canadian première, 1983)

Stanza II (1971) for harp and tape was premiered in Paris in 1972 by Ursula Holliger to whom it is dedicated. It is intended as a companion piece to the solo flute piece, *Voice*. There are three sources of sound on the tape; bell-like sounds produced by two harps, an electronically produced drone which pervades the piece, and a third which is composed of natural sounds—bird songs and human voices. These represent the "myriad shifting sounds constantly penetrating the world of man."

Enchanted by the mystery of water I wrote a piece of music using water power as the means to activate a musical instrument. The glissandi produced by water were so delicate that no other means could have reproduced that sound. Thinking of musical form I think of liquid form. I wish for musical changes to be as gradual as the tides.

TORU TAKEMITSU (1980)

Rain Spell was written for the Japanese contemporary music ensemble "Sound Space Ark" and was premiered by them in Yokohama in January of 1983. Takemitsu's fascination with the subject of water in all its manifestations has been a continuing theme in his works, dating back to the beginning of his career with his 1963 electronic work, *Water Music*.

Sometimes my music follows the design of a particular existing garden. At times it may follow the design of an imaginary garden I have sketched. Time in my music may be said to be the duration of my walk through these gardens.

TORU TAKEMITSU (1987)

Commissioned by New Music Concerts with the generous assistance of the Canada Council, **Bryce** is dedicated to Bryce Engelman who is the son of Robin Engelman. The piece is fundamentally constructed on the relationship between the three notes extracted from the name "Bryce", **Bb**, **C** and **E**, and eight quarter tones which are close to these three notes. *Bryce* is a water music, tranquilly rising and falling like a ripple.

*In July of 1971 Toru met my son Bryce who was seven years old. This was the first time my son ever bowed to anyone and the first time a stranger had offered to shake his hand. Toru and Bryce shared an afternoon of origami and later played softball in the backyard. At that time Toru asked me the meaning of my son's name, but I had forgotten. By the next day, Toru had checked it out and told me it meant "the centre of feeling". He said, "I am going to write a piece." **Bryce** was premiered in Toronto in 1976.*

ROBIN ENGELMAN (1996)

In an interview with Alan Blyth in 1973 Takemitsu explained his growing pre-occupation with writing for individual players. Re-

porting in *The Times* of London, Blyth observed: "In doing so, he takes into account not only the instrument but also the individual's features and personality, the occasion on which the work will be performed and the conditions of the performance. In this way he is hoping to get away from the tendency towards the abstract in music."

A prime example of this is the repertoire of flute works he conceived for the Swiss flutist Aurèle Nicolet. Nicolet (b. 1926) has won an immense international reputation as an interpreter of contemporary music. A student of André Jaunet and Marcel Moyse, he played in orchestras under Hermann Scherchen and Wilhelm Furtwängler until 1959, after which he became professor of flute at the Hochschule der Künste, Berlin, and then at the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik in Freiburg—a position now held by Robert Aitken. **New Music Concerts** brought Mr. Nicolet and Mr. Aitken together for a duo recital, "Virtuoso Flute Music of Our Time", in December of 1992.

Takemitsu's extensive writing for the Western flute incorporates the wide range of microtonal and timbral subtleties characteristic of traditional *shakuhachi* performance practices as well as the extended performance techniques of the European avant-garde, including percussive attacks, multiphonics, and singing through the instrument.

Voice (1971) was suggested by a line of poetry from Shuzo Takiguchi's "Handmade Proverbs" which, when rendered into English, reveals its Shakespearian source:—*who goes there? Speak, transparency, whoever you are!* Nicolet premiered *Voice* in July of 1971 at the Festival of Hawaii. This particular festival had a special meaning for the composer, for it was at a previous such event in 1964 that Takemitsu was befriended by John Cage.

The solo flute work *Itinerant* (1989) belongs to a cluster of short pieces and literary articles commemorating the lives of artists the composer admired. It is dedicated to the memory of the Japanese sculptor Isamu Noguchi. Concerning his friend, Takemitsu wrote in 1973, "Noguchi is a traveler. My acquaintance with him and the experience of seeing his works ended my comfortable existence and set me on the path to the world of the unknown". The first performance by flutist Paula Robison took place in New York in 1989.

and then I knew 'twas Wind (1992) was commissioned by Akira Obi as a gift for Aurèle Nicolet and was premiered by Nicolet in May of 1992 in Mito, Japan. The title of the work is taken from a verse in one of the longer poems of Emily Dickinson. Before the words of the title comes the line, *Like Rain it sounded till it curved*, which then continues, *And then I knew 'twas Wind*.

Air (1995), Takemitsu's final work, was conceived as a 70th birthday present for Aurèle Nicolet. The Japanese flutist Yasukazu Uemura first played it for him on January 28, 1996 in Oberwil, Switzerland.

Toru Takemitsu died a year ago today on February 20th. He had been suffering from bladder cancer since the previous year, and died in hospital of pneumonia.

For all, death is inevitable. In the sorrow that grips me I see not the void but the clear blue sky, and I sense the vast realm of undying death. Under no circumstance should we let sorrow close down our lives.

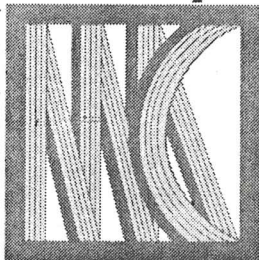
TORU TAKEMITSU (1980)

Unless otherwise noted, quotations attributed to Toru Takemitsu are excerpted from *Confronting Silence: Selected Writings*, translated and edited by Yoshiko Kakudo and Glenn Glasow, published by Fallen Leaf Press, Berkeley, California, 1995. (ISBN 0-914913-36-0)

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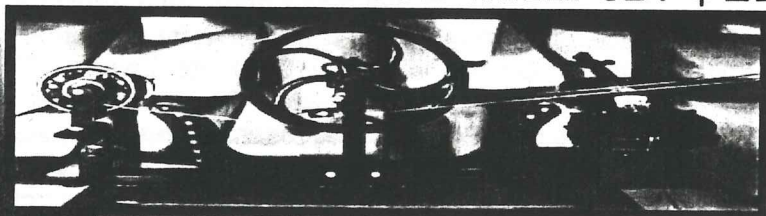
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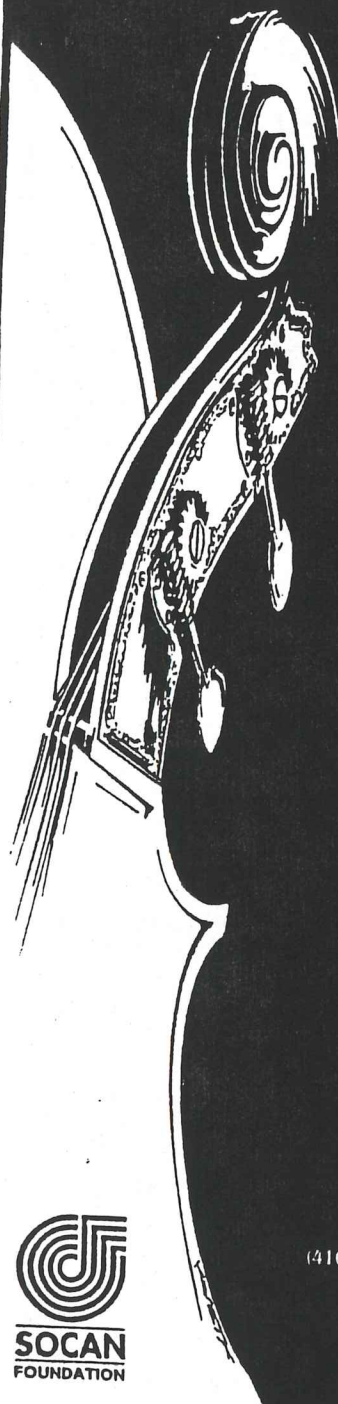
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